

# Herbert Hoover

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Herbert Hoover National Historic Site  
West Branch, Iowa



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## Tallgrass Prairie Walk

Dear Instructor:

The tallgrass prairie and Hoover Creek support a wide variety of plants and animals. This restored environment allows students to immerse themselves in a surrounding that once covered much of the Midwest.

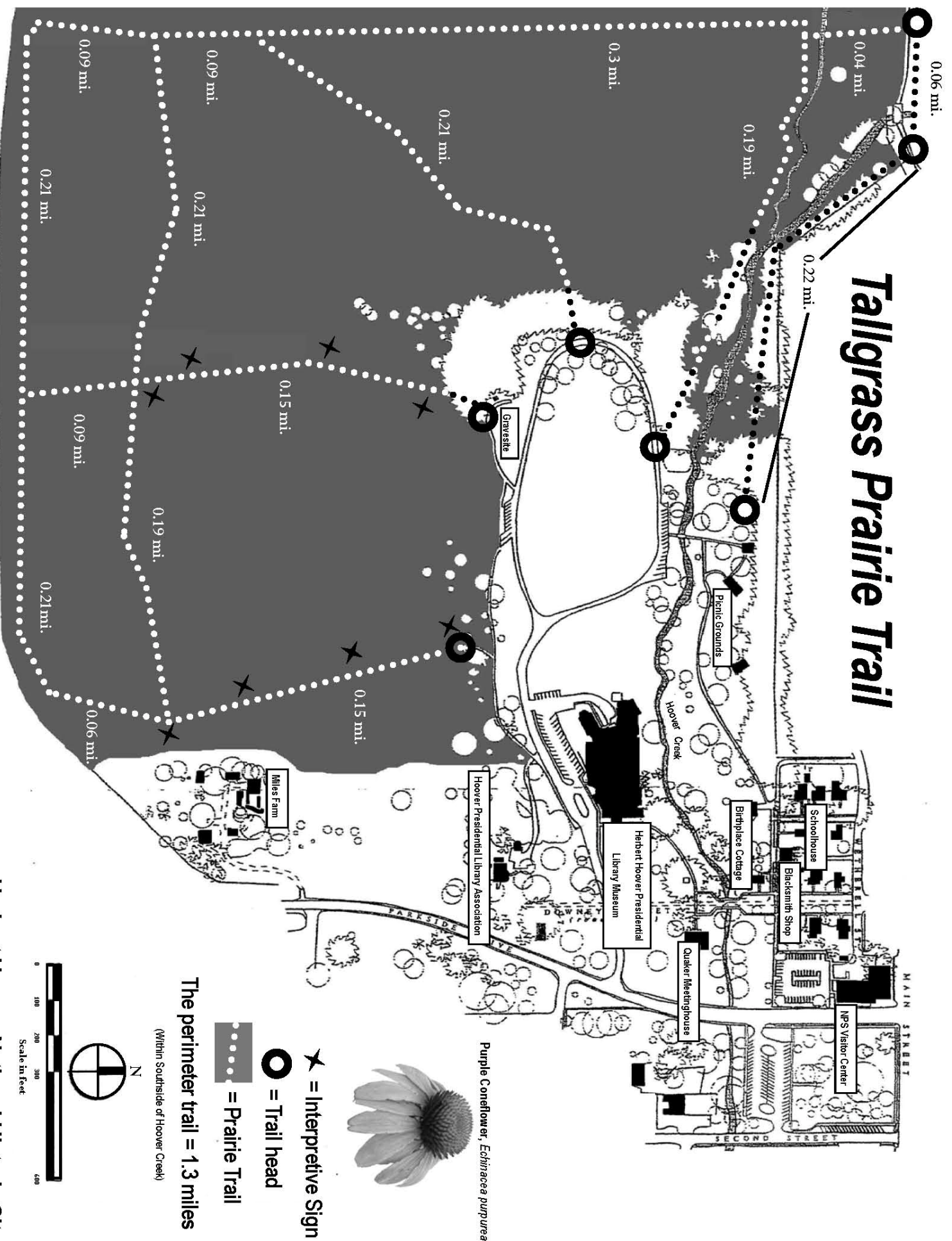
Enclosed is a map of the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site's 81-acre tallgrass prairie, and activity sheets that instructors can use with students to better understand the diverse ecosystem that is the tallgrass prairie.

While traveling on the prairie, be prepared for potential hazards like extreme sun exposure (which can cause sunstroke, sunburn, and dehydration) and insect bites (ticks, bees, mosquitoes).

Keep in mind that as the seasons change, so does the prairie. Different plants and animals can be seen during different seasons and in some instances may become limited or scarce.

Help us preserve the park for the next group that will visit. Please do not disturb any plants or animals found in the tallgrass prairie. Thank you and enjoy your visit to Herbert Hoover National Historic Site.

# Tallgrass Prairie Trail

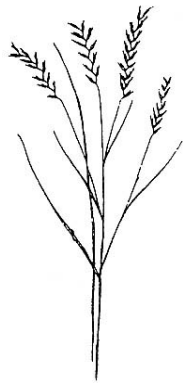


## Prairie Grasses

Shown below are five different grass varieties found throughout the tallgrass prairie. While walking through the prairie try to identify all of these grasses.



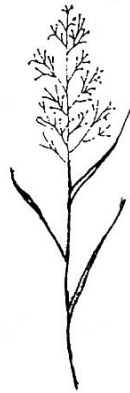
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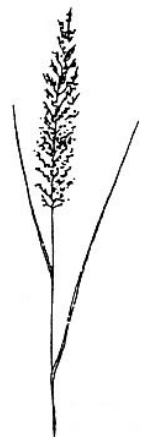
Little  
bluestem



Big  
bluestem



Switch  
grass



Indian  
grass

How do prairie grasses benefit the soil?

What grass types are more common than others throughout the prairie?

What do the grass varieties need to survive?

## **A Diverse Ecosystem**

**While walking through the tallgrass prairie use your five senses (sound, sight, smell, taste, and touch), try to observe everything surrounding you.**

What sounds do you hear? Which are natural and which are human-made?

How do the human-made sounds affect the prairie?

What colors can you see? Does the prairie change color?

What can you smell?

Do you see animals eating the grass? Which ones? What other animals might eat prairie grasses?

## The Prairie Long Ago

**The tallgrass prairie you're walking on is a restored prairie. At one point this land was a giant corn field. The prairie was planted to stop erosion. Take a moment to think about how much the land has changed.**

What did this land look like for pioneers?

Would settling the prairie be an easy task?

What supplies would you need to live on the prairie, and what supplies could the prairie provide?

What type of animals used to roam the prairies?

Draw a picture of your ideal house on the prairie:



## Exploring the Prairie

**Before settlement, tallgrass prairies covered nearly 30 million acres of the Midwest. While walking through the prairie look for:**

### **An insect:**

What type?

What is it doing?

### **A flower:**

What color is it?

How does it smell?

How does it feel?

### **A bird:**

What sounds is it making?

What color is it? How big is it?

### **Animal scat (look but don't touch):**

What animal do you think made the scat?

What was the animal eating?

### **A grass:**

How tall is the grass?

What is it used for?

What is underneath the grass?